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CAMPUS NEWS

Gardner-Webb's Dr. Dee Hunt Passes Away

BY GARDNER-WEBB UNIVERSITY ON JULY 9, 2021



Alumni, Faculty and Staff Remember the Life of Long-time Mentor and Colleague

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.— Gardner-Webb University recently said goodbye to a legendary leader of the campus community. Dr. Dee Hunt passed away on July 8 after a courageous battle with an extended illness. Hunt served in many roles throughout her decades-long career at GWU. During her nearly 40 years of service, she was a professor, coach, administrator, dean, department chair and community advocate.

“Dee Hunt has been a towering figure at Gardner-Webb for decades. Her fingerprints are all over the University’s success,” noted Gardner-Webb President, Dr. William Downs. “Dr. Hunt left an indelible impression on anyone who met her...fiercely determined, unfiltered, and always caring. Above all else was her love for the students. That love will be an enduring legacy, a legacy for which we are all so very grateful,” added Downs.

Hunt joined the GWU faculty in 1978 as associate professor of health education and physical education. She distinguished herself as a coach and consultant in the field of women’s athletics, particularly volleyball and softball. She also provided distinguished leadership to the Department of Health, Sport and Physical Education as chair from 1988 to 1995 and again from 1998 to 1999. In 1993, Hunt was awarded the Excellence in Teaching Award from GWU. As the founding dean of the College of Education, Hunt provided innovative and energetic leadership, directing the program’s inception and accreditation from 1995-99. Over the years, students gave her the nickname, “Doc Hunt,” which was used by many on campus.

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Lisa Tucker is a former student-athlete, and she was mentored by Hunt while on Gardner-Webb’s volleyball team. The two developed a friendship that lasted over three and a half decades. “Our story together started in 1985 and will continue for the rest of my life,” said Tucker. “I tell people that she changed the trajectory of my life, and for that, I will love her forever. She was a master of sculpting students, making them believe in themselves. She worked her magic thru selfless acts of kindness and discipline; discipline that was always backed by her love of students and teaching,” remembered Tucker.

Hunt continued to teach physical education until 2010, when she was named vice president of Student Development and dean of students. Moving into the administrative role was a tough decision, because she loved interacting with her students in the classroom. In her Student Development role, Hunt met directly with students, parents and family members to create a purposeful and caring campus environment. She also planned and implemented improvements in the Student Development arena.



In 2012, Hunt successfully directed the physical move of the Student Development division into the newly constructed Tucker Student Center, which she helped plan. The dedication ceremony topped the list as one of Hunt’s favorite GWU memories. Longtime GWU supporter Robert Tucker made a surprise half-million-dollar gift in honor of Hunt at the event.

Hunt served as vice president of Student Development until she retired in 2017. Reflecting on her 39 years at the University, she described what she hoped would be her legacy at GWU. “That I made a difference,” she stated. “That every contact I’ve had with any kid—no matter how brief or how long or deep or shallow—made them a better person.”

One year after her retirement from Gardner-Webb, Hunt became the first faculty member to receive three emeriti titles. On May 4, 2018, she was honored for her service as a professor emerita of physical education, dean emerita of the College of Education and vice president emerita of Student Development.

In November 2020, Gardner-Webb University celebrated the naming of the Dr. Dee M. Hunt Student Development Suite in the Tucker Student Center in her honor.

Services to celebrate the life of Hunt will take place at a later date.

Located in the North Carolina foothills, Gardner-Webb University is a private, Christian, liberal arts university. Gardner-Webb emphasizes a strong student-centered experience and rigorous academics to prepare students to become effective leaders within the global community. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.